

February 14, 2014  
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony  
Rachel Callan, Brain Injury Specialist  
Brain Injury Alliance of CT

Good-Evening Chairs and Appropriations Committee Members. My name is Rachel Callan, Brain Injury Specialist, at the Brain Injury Alliance of CT (BIAC). I am submitting this testimony in regard to H.B. 5052, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS. I ask that you oppose this bill and commit to increase funding for the Brain Injury Alliance of CT and protect the grant that allows us to serve the community of individuals with brain injuries.

The Medicaid ABI Waiver in Section E.1.10.k Independent Advocacy mandates that "DSS contracts with the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut, Inc (BIAC) for the purpose of providing consultation, advocacy, resource facilitation, support, information, training and outreach to persons with a brain injury and their families" We have continued to do this year in year out, for almost 30 years, as a direct result of an operating grant from the Department of Social Services as they themselves are unable to provide. Last year our budget was \$126,000, this year we have access to a little under \$119,000, a decrease in \$7,000 despite the fact we have seen an increase of over 600% in calls to BIAC's helpline alone.

As a brain injury specialist I am responsible, along with two colleagues for operating and maintaining a toll free helpline, which is accessed daily by survivors of brain injury, their friends and family, caregivers, professionals, as well as educators, and veterans. I recently had a call from a woman who was concerned with managing the welfare of her two sons and herself, given the tragedy of an automobile crash a year ago, in which her 17 year old son suffered multiple injuries, including severe traumatic brain injury. Due to limited in-state resources for his rehabilitation, her only recourse was to place him in an out-of-state facility. He is now an adult and would be eligible to be placed in an in-state facility, however, the nature of his injuries and his age are impacting the kind of in-patient services open to this family. My consumer, his mother, is herself distressed with overwhelming single-parenting

demands for this son and for an infant born shortly after the car crash. She is tormented by her own anxiety and sadness about the trauma, as well as how to make decisions about, and receive, proper care for him. Her consultation with BIAC has given her a sense of personal support not only through our helpline but through her participation in 2 of the 27 support groups we currently run across the state. Additionally, my immediate interventions will be to help her find support through mentoring services that my organization provides. We are the **ONLY** organization in the state that is capable of doing this.

As such, if BIAC's contract with DSS was terminated, with the cut of this vital funding, DSS would no longer have the mechanism to provide the essential services required as part of the ABI Medicaid Waiver and all those affected by the often devastating impact of TBI would no longer have access to the level of support and information they currently receive through our organization.

For just, \$118,918 last year BIAC was responsible for providing the following services:

- Independent Advocacy for Participants
- Consultation and resource facilitation
- Disseminating information to the community related to brain injury.
- Facilitating monthly support groups throughout Connecticut to provide information and networking opportunities to clients and client families affected by brain injury
- Statewide toll free support number, fielding calls from persons who have sustained a brain injury, their families, caregivers and service providers
- Facilitating a Providers Council with meetings 5 to 6 times per year to promote networking and information exchange between providers.
- Serving as an advocate who informs participants of their rights and supports them at team meetings, as needed.
- Training and community education programs

In order to maintain the level of service we provide I again ask that you reconsider Governor Malloy's attempt to eliminate our sustenance, and in essence a lifeline to all those affected by brain injury, by not only reinstating but increasing our operating grant to one that allows us to not only continue to deliver all of the services previously mentioned but to grow in our abilities and responsibilities to the community we serve. Thank you for your time.

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